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# Speeches Honoring Abraham Lincoln

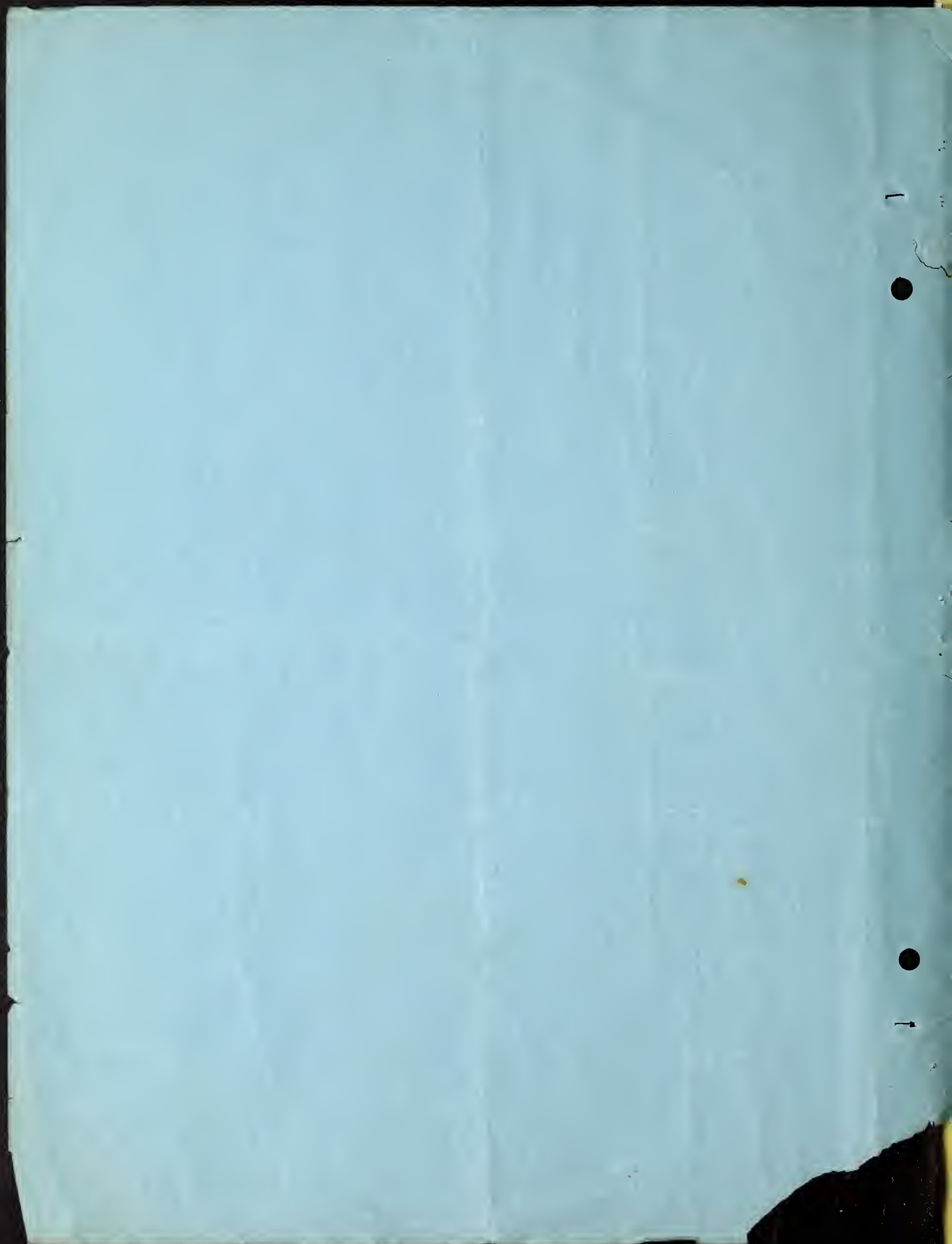
N.H. Loomis

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

An Address Prepared by N. H. Loomis





ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

I am pleased to be with you tonight. I appreciate your cordial welcome and rejoice that I am able to join in your homage to America's greatest citizen -- soon to be recognized as the World's greatest citizen. It is remarkable how close his relationship seems to all of us. In our imagination he does not appear as a great man standing upon a pedestal apart from the rest of mankind, but as a close and intimate friend, of whom we are not afraid and to whom we would go and make a request as freely as we would to our own father. He was a just and a merciful man with a heart brimful of sympathy for weak and erring humanity, and he was always eager to find a reason to justify him in overlooking a personal wrong or in pardoning a public offense. With what feelings of love do our hearts go out to him when we recall the patience and humility with which he bore the burdens of his country during the long and weary years of the Civil War, and with what deep emotions do we contemplate his attitude at the end when the consummation of his labors was within reach and the men who had fought him so persistently were utterly vanquished; how he looked upon them as brothers, not as enemies, and longed for their restoration to the positions they occupied before the war began!

A man of lowly birth, with no opportunity to attend school, reared in a rough pioneer country, he was able through his own unaided efforts to educate himself and to so train his



mental powers that he became the intellectual equal of the strongest men of his time; the master of a literary style which found its best expression in his Gettysburg address -- one of the classics of the English language; the leader of the political and social thought of his time; the Commander in Chief of the nation's army and navy; the arbiter of his country's destiny; -- and through it all he maintained a simplicity of character and an honesty of purpose which made him the idol of the American people.

How he managed to do it may not be easy to explain,-- the secret of his success may be hard to fathom; but the principal characteristics of the man may be understood by all: The truth was his constant guide and he sought no results which were in conflict with the eternal verities. He was not a man who tried to fool the people, or to take unfair advantages. Fallacies were never the produce of his mental equipment. Straightforward and honest all of the time, he was a man to be trusted upon all occasions. He had the courage of his convictions and no personal ambition for political preferment caused him to change his views or to express beliefs which he did not entertain. He was afraid of no man or set of men, and nobody ever accused him of being a mollycoddle. Although a man of peace, he was unswerving in his determination to preserve the Union at all hazards, and he adhered to this determination through countless vicissitudes and the varying fortunes of war, until his object was attained.

He was a practical man. The opinions he entertained



and the plans he formulated were susceptible of being worked out and put into execution. He was no mere idealist whose conceptions could not be made effective. He dealt with actualities and brought to bear on all problems ordinary common sense. He was a man with a determination to be in the right; with a courage to do the right, and with a keen sense of the appropriate way to enforce the right.

The details of his early life are so familiar that I will not take the time to review them. We know that he was reared under conditions which were very simple in all their aspects and the world wonders how such an illustrious character could have had such an unpropitious beginning.

But was it not said of the greatest man who ever lived,

"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" And were

not his disciples -- those upon whom he depended to carry

on his work after his death -- men of lowly birth and humble environment? The life which Abraham Lincoln led as a boy was

undoubtedly the sort of a life necessary to give to him the

strength and power, the courage, the self confidence, the

honesty of purpose, the love of liberty and freedom, and the

art of handling men without giving offense or making enemies,

which were such essential attributes of his character when

he became President.

In considering Mr. Lincoln's lack of opportunities for study, we are apt to lose sight of the fact that his



environment was not always that of pioneer life. Although in his boyhood days, and the days of his early manhood the states of Indiana and Illinois were extremely primitive, this was not true when Mr. Lincoln had become established in the practice of law and had removed to Springfield. Both states had grown rapidly and at that time were filled with active, intelligent people from the east, many of whom were well educated and cultured. Schools and colleges were numerous and good books were easy to obtain. Mr. Lincoln appreciating the meagerness of his early education lost none of his opportunities for obtaining knowledge, and when he came to measure his mental attainments with those of the best lawyers in the state he soon found himself to be the peer of any of them, and in time became the acknowledged leader of the Illinois bar. The lawyers of his day were very fond of discussing literature with each other. Selections from great authors, including prose and poetry, as well as extracts from famous speeches were committed to memory by them and were utilized to enliven their conversation and display their learning. These talks would take place at various times and in all sorts of places; sometimes while waiting in court for their cases to be called for trial; sometimes while waiting for the jury to return a verdict; sometimes while sitting about the tavern at night; and sometimes while at their offices after the day's work was done. Lawyers then, as now, undoubtedly appeared to the uninitiated as mortal enemies during the conflicts of the court room, but they were very friendly during their hours of social inter-



course; and the stories they told, the repartee they indulged in, and the bright sallies which passed backward and forward among them, conduced not only to good fellowship, but to the stimulation of their intellects and to the awakening of a strong desire upon the part of the ambitious to read and learn so that they might keep up with the procession and not fall behind in the display of wits. In gatherings of this sort Mr. Lincoln came to be the center of attraction. Ordinarily of a rather sad appearance he was on such occasions full of vivacity and had an endless fund of quotations, stories and anecdotes with which to illustrate his points and entertain his auditors.

Mr. Lincoln's experience in the actual trial of lawsuits was also a great educator. A diligent study of the books and a thorough understanding of fundamental principles as laid down by great jurists was essential to the lawyer who would hold his own in the conflicts of the forum. It may be supposed that eminent lawyers are found only in the large centers of population, and the older communities of the east, but this is not necessarily so. It is surprising to note how relatively few are the lawyers in the large cities of the east who are skilful in the actual trial of cases, while in the newer and smaller communities there are many young lawyers full of ambition and energy who are good advocates because their only hope of success lies in their ability to handle a lawsuit in court.



They usually have ample opportunities to work up their cases and when the time for trial is reached the court is not ordinarily so busy as to prevent it from allowing the lawyers plenty of time to give full swing to the exercise of their forensic abilities. Where half an hour might be given in a large city for the argument of a case to the jury, several hours might be allowed in the same sort of a case in the country; and if the lawyer happened to be a good talker and the case was at all interesting, the whole town might turn out to hear his speech.

Then again it should be remembered that Mr. Lincoln served a term in Congress about the time the war with Mexico was declared. This was a great advantage in a purely educational way. It brought him in close contact with men of ability from all parts of the country and the work he was required to do could not result otherwise than in the development of his mentality and the increase of his knowledge. Books were plentiful in Washington and he had excellent opportunities for research. He made a number of very creditable speeches and took an active part as a member of the lower house.

But after all is said that can be said about the education which fitted him for the great task of his life, it must be admitted that the thorough study of the few books of his youth must have been more potent in the formation of his character than anything in the way of study that came afterwards. In those early days he had the Bible, Shakespeare,



Aesop's Fables, Pilgrim's Progress and Robinson Crusoe. The reading and re-reading of these great books was an education in itself and gave to the boy a deep and broad foundation upon which to build the after experiences of his life. He built his house upon the rock "upon which the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, but it fell not".

Mr. Lincoln's study of the Bible and of Shakespeare did not stop when he reached manhood. They were his constant companions and when he occupied the White House a copy of each was always within easy reach. If a person will carefully read Mr. Lincoln's public utterances, as well as his private correspondence, and observe his references to Biblical sayings, he cannot help but be impressed with the thought that the Bible was a great factor not only in the spiritual, but in the intellectual development of Mr. Lincoln.

In expressing my appreciation of the educational value of his close study of the Bible, it is not my intention to under-estimate the necessary influence upon his mind and character of his constant reading of Shakespeare. It was a series of lessons in human nature, in the art of expression, in the use of words, and in literary style. His familiarity with Robinson Crusoe, Aesop's Fables and Pilgrim's Progress must have greatly influenced him in the acquisition of his own extraordinary art of clear, illuminating and succinct expression. If you will take the time to read his works, you will be impressed with the marvelous manner in which he stated in a most concise and pleasing way the views he



entertained and the thoughts he wished to express. Furthermore, his penmanship was good, his spelling correct, his punctuation proper and his style suited to the sentiments he sought to express. All of this could not merely happen. No man could secure such attainments without hard study and careful practice. That he was, as a matter of fact, diligent in his efforts to obtain an education is the testimony of all who knew him. I will relate to you an incident in his life which will illustrate the manner in which he studied after he had become a successful lawyer: It was the practice of leading lawyers during Mr. Lincoln's time to follow the court about from place to place. They traveled on horseback and their saddle bags usually carried a couple of law books. As many as possible went to their homes to spend Sunday, but Mr. Lincoln usually remained at the hotel until the crowd came back. While awaiting their return he spent at least a part of his time in study. Even during the week while court was in session, he would frequently lie awake until the early hours of the morning studying some text book. Mr. Herndon, his partner, relates that frequently they would occupy the same bed, that the bed would sometimes be too short and that Mr. Lincoln's feet would project clear beyond the foot-board; that with a candle on a chair at the head of the bed and his feet protruding from the other end, he would read and study until two o'clock in the morning, while the other lawyers occupying the same room were snoring loudly. In this way he studied Euclid until he could with



ease demonstrate all the propositions in the six books.

There is another incident not often referred to, which indicates the manner in which Mr. Lincoln, the lawyer, handled cases of minor importance: In the spring term of the Tazewell County Court in 1847, which at that time was held in the village of Tremont, Mr. Lincoln was employed in several suits, and among them was one entitled Case vs. Snow brothers. The Snow brothers, as appeared in evidence had purchased from an old gentleman named Case what was then called a prairie team, consisting of two or three yoke of oxen and a prairie plow, and gave therefor their joint note for some two hundred dollars; but when the note fell due they refused to pay, giving as a reason that they were not of age, and therefore that their note was not legally binding upon them. The note was placed in Mr. Lincoln's hands for collection. He filed suit and when the trial came on the defendants did not deny signing the note, but pleaded through their counsel, that they were minors, and that Mr. Case knew they were at the time the contract was made and the note given. These facts were admitted by Mr. Lincoln. The statute upon the subject was read and its validity was also admitted. The Counsel for the defendants were permitted without objection to state the foregoing facts to the jury, and to show by the statute that the defendants could not be held responsible on their contract. Those present who were interested in the plaintiff's side of the case began to be uneasy, fearing that his lawyer was not sufficiently protecting the rights of the old gentleman.



Just then, Mr. Lincoln slowly arose, and standing before the jury in his strange, half-erect attitude, addressed them in a clear and quiet tone of voice as follows:

"Gentlemen of the Jury, are you willing to allow these boys to begin life with this shame and disgrace attached to their character? If you are, I am not. These poor innocent boys would never have attempted this low villany had it not been for the advice of these lawyers. You have it in your power to set them right before the world."

He argued for the young men only and did not mention his client's name. The jury, without leaving their seats, decided that the defendants must pay the debt; and the latter, after hearing Mr. Lincoln, were as willing to pay it as the jury were determined they should. The entire argument lasted not more than five minutes.

I do not wish to present young Lincoln to you as a mere "prig", because it would be the very opposite to the truth; but it is a noteworthy fact that notwithstanding the rude environments of his early days, he did not drink, swear, gamble or use tobacco. He was a leader among the boys of his neighborhood, was accredited with marvelous feats of strength and agility, and was almost a prodigy in the matter of his personal habits. One of his earliest efforts upon the platform was an address upon temperance, delivered before a gathering of young men in Springfield in the year 1842.



During his early manhood, before he was admitted to the bar, Mr. Lincoln took a trip down the Mississippi river to New Orleans, on a flat boat. While upon this trip he was so horrified by the manner in which slaves were treated by those who owned or had control of them, that he became an avowed opponent of slavery, and favored its restriction within the narrowest limits permitted by the Constitution. At a later period, his speech on "The House Divided Against Itself" in which he asserted that this country could not remain half slave and half free, created a distinct sensation and caused Mr. Lincoln to be recognized as one of the foremost champions of those who opposed the extension of slavery.

✓ Shortly afterwards Mr. Lincoln's debate with Douglas brought him into general public notice, and gave him still greater prominence. Although he had served a term in Congress he gained no special distinction because of that fact, and upon his retirement gave up the idea of further taking an interest in national affairs. He actively engaged in the practice of law and evidently intended to give his whole time to his private business, until the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill aroused his attention and convinced him that the slave power, not satisfied with its right to own human chattels in slave states, intended to obtain a similar right in all the territories, and eventually in the free states themselves. This feeling was intensified by the decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case, which



made it still more evident that slavery was to be extended to territory which for years had been conceded to be free. It resulted in causing Mr. Lincoln to become active in an effort to stop the propaganda of the slave holders. He made public speeches, wrote letters, and in various other ways sought to arouse the North to a sense of the peril which confronted it. Kansas was to be made a slave state if by any possibility it could be brought about. The Missouri Compromise which had been acquiesced in by the North and the South for thirty-five years and which guaranteed that with the exception of Missouri no slave states were to be created out of territories north of the southern boundary line of Missouri, was repealed with the understanding that the people of those territories were themselves to decide whether they were to be made citizens of free or slave states. Then came the Dred Scott decision which held that as slaves were chattels their owners had the constitutional right to take them into any territory of the United States and there hold them; thus apparently destroying the understanding and paving the way for the protection of slavery throughout the Union. It was the situation thus created which Mr. Lincoln attacked, and he did it with all the intensity of his nature. His efforts were given wider publicity because he was not what was ordinarily termed an abolitionist. He was opposed to slavery but had no intention of attacking the institution except by methods which were perfectly constitutional. He was not seeking its extinction



in states which were recognized as slave states, but was endeavoring to prevent its extension into territory which had up to that time been recognized as free by both North and South. He was a native of Kentucky, his family had gone to that state from Virginia; he was not ranked as a radical and his powerful strokes against the aggressions of the slavery interests were much more potent than if he had been recognized as an avowed abolitionist.

This was the state of affairs when arrangements were entered into for a joint debate between Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Douglas, to be held at different places in the state of Illinois. Mr. Douglas was a forceful speaker and had the prestige of being a leader in the dominant party of his time. He was a native of Vermont, but had gone west while a young boy and was thoroughly identified with the west and particularly with his adopted state, -- Illinois. He and Mr. Lincoln were about the same age, had practiced law together, had paid attentions to the same young lady, and in various ways had been rivals for years. It would have been difficult for Mr. Lincoln to have encountered a more formidable antagonist with whom to engage in debate upon the slavery question in the state of Illinois. Mr. Douglas was a candidate for re-election to the Senate and Mr. Lincoln entered the lists against him. Within a short time a presidential election was to be held and both men were regarded as presidential timber. Mr. Lincoln did not entertain great expectations of being



elected Senator, but did anticipate that he might have a chance to be elected President; and he bent his energies towards shaping a situation which would at least defeat the democratic candidate for President and put in the White House a man who would halt the onward march of slavery.

Mr. Douglas was committed to the policy of permitting the residents of the territories to decide for themselves whether they were to be admitted into the Union as citizens of free or of slave states. The Democrats of the North concurred in his views, those of the South, who favored slavery, supported by the decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case, were preparing to maintain their right to take slaves into any territory of the United States and there hold them as property protected by the Constitution, regardless of the wishes of a majority of the voters. They did not want the issue raised as to whether a territory should be voted a free state or a slave state. They did not relish the thought of having the people of the North spurred into action and encouraged to move into a territory for the purpose of making it free. They were satisfied with their rights under the Dred Scott decision, and did not care to have the situation stirred up by the agitation of Senator Douglas' scheme of squatter sovereignty. It was Mr. Lincoln's object during the debate to so commit Mr. Douglas to the policy of permitting the voters of a



territory to establish its status as a slave or a free community, that he could not thereafter evade the issue; and thus to drive from his support as a candidate for President the votes of southern slaveholders. With this accomplished Mr. Douglas might secure the Democratic nomination for the Presidency, but he could not be elected.

Mr. Lincoln accomplished all that he hoped for and forced Mr. Douglas into open antagonism to the wishes and desires of the slaveholding wing of his party. In order to maintain his theory of squatter sovereignty and at the same time concede the controlling effect of the decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case, Mr. Douglas was driven into the inconsistent and wholly untenable position of arguing that although a slaveholder might exercise his constitutional right to take his slaves into any territory of the United States, yet that this right would be valueless unless the people of the territory passed laws for their protection. This contention on the part of Mr. Douglas widened the breach between himself and the slave holding interests of the South to such an extent that it could not be <sup>closed</sup> ~~overcome~~. Mr. Lincoln not only forced Mr. Douglas into a position which unalterably fixed the breach between the two wings of the Democratic party, but he exposed the aims of the slaveholding oligarchy so ably and made their plans so apparent that the entire North was aroused and filled with a determination to frustrate their designs. One of the immediate objects to be accomplished in order to carry out the purposes of the anti-slavery party



was to fill the territory of Kansas with a body of free state men, so numerous and so fearless that a majority vote in favor of slavery could not possibly be obtained. How thoroughly this object was accomplished is a matter of history well known to all of us.

In the whole conduct of the debate with Mr. Douglas, Mr. Lincoln displayed such character, such skill, such force as a public speaker, such knowledge of paramount issues, and such consummate ability as a leader of political forces, that he became at once one of the foremost men in his party, and its logical candidate for President.

But it was Mr. Lincoln's conduct and actions during the war which made of him the nation's hero, and causes us upon the anniversary of his birthday to gather together and extend to his memory the adoration of a loving and grateful people. It is not so much because he was Commander-in-Chief of a great army which achieved a momentous military victory, but because during four years of bloody warfare and ~~fraternal~~ <sup>fratricidal</sup> strife he represented the best thoughts and aspirations of a God-fearing, liberty-loving people; because he led them with hope and courage during all the vicissitudes of that fearful struggle; because he discharged the duties of his office with justice and mercy; because he was meek and humble, patient and forbearing; because he carried on a great war without hatred towards his enemies; and because by thus measuring up to the true ideals of American manhood he was able to save our Government and destroy slavery. /



The two main objects which Mr. Lincoln, as President, sought to accomplish, were the preservation of the Union, and so far as it could be done in a constitutional manner, the abolition of slavery. The preservation of the Union, however, was his primary object. Slavery was bound to end in time, but if the Union were destroyed the damage would be irreparable. He would save the Union without slavery if he could, but would save the Union with slavery if that were the only way in which it could be done. Strong as his attitude against slavery was, he was in favor of giving it the protection guaranteed by the constitution, and at no time did he give expression to the thought that the constitution should be violated or evaded in order to destroy slavery. The issuance of the emancipation proclamation was the exercise of a war power pure and simple, and would not have been promulgated if its effect had not been to strengthen the military forces of the North and weaken those of the South. An examination of the proclamation will show that it did not free all black men in slavery, but was made effective only in territory under the control of the Confederate government. Where portions of the South were in possession of Federal troops the emancipation proclamation did not apply. Mr. Lincoln knew that he had no constitutional power under normal conditions to free the slaves, and that it could be done only as a war measure. In order therefore to be consistent with the only theory upon which he could legally act, he excepted from the operation of his proclamation territory in the control of Federal troops, because the



freeing of slaves in such places, would have no tendency to weaken or injure the enemy.

Towards the close of the war when it was inevitable that the Confederacy would fall, Mr. Lincoln submitted to his Cabinet for consideration a proposition which he had favored upon a couple of other occasions. It was to the effect that the slaves be paid for, but as he received no encouragement from any member of his Cabinet, the proposal was not pressed. As this incident seems to have been overlooked or forgotten until it was made public by a member of Mr. Lincoln's cabinet, the late J. P. Usher of Lawrence, Kansas, and as I was the amanuensis used to give it publicity, I will take a moment of your time to read the statement as dictated to me by Judge Usher:

"Soon after his return from the James, the Cabinet was convened and he read to it for approval a message which he had prepared to be submitted to Congress, in which he recommended that Congress appropriate \$300,000,000. to be apportioned among the several slave states, in proportion to slave population, to be distributed to the holders of slaves in those states upon condition that they would consent to the abolition of slavery, the disbanding of the insurgent army, and would acknowledge and submit to the laws of the United States. The members of the Cabinet were all opposed. He seemed somewhat



surprised at that and asked: 'How long will the war last?' No man answered, but he soon said:

'A hundred days. We are spending now in carrying on the war \$3,000,000 a day, which will amount to all this money, besides all the lives.' With a deep sigh he added: 'But you are all opposed to me, and I will not send the message'."

When Mr. Lincoln became President the opinion prevailed among a large number of ill advised leaders of the party, who were intensely interested in the welfare of the administration, that he did not have sufficient experience to properly perform all the responsible duties of his office, and that it would be necessary for skilled statesmen inside the Cabinet and out, to carefully direct him as to the course he should pursue with respect to all important matters of state. Even as astute a politician as Mr. Seward, Secretary of State, imagined it to be his duty to suggest in writing certain policies to be pursued by the President, and to intimate that he would not refuse the responsibility of running the Government himself if the President should see fit to call upon him to do so. It did not take him long to learn that although the President appreciated his ability and patriotism, and would have gladly supported him in the performance of the duties of chief executive if he had been elected to that position, that those duties devolved upon the man who had taken the oath of office, and that he proposed to exercise them. The reproof which Mr. Lincoln administered was



polite but firm, and to the point, and Mr. Seward immediately and gracefully acknowledged the supremacy of the President. Mr. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, considered himself to be much superior to Mr. Lincoln, and retained that opinion to the end; but he knew that the President was the actual head of the government and could not be induced to act against his judgment by anybody. Mr. Stanton, the most determined man in the administration, started in with a very poor opinion of the President's qualifications as a leader, but ended up by acknowledging that he was the greatest master of men he had ever known. In the matter of trifles and details of no special consequence he was indifferent, but on fundamentals he was as unyielding as adamant. As Morse, his biographer, puts it "whenever he saw fit to be master he was master".

Considerable discussion has taken place as to Mr. Lincoln's religious views. I have never doubted that he was a deeply religious man. He may have said or done some things in the course of his life, which caused some persons to believe to the contrary, but such evidence is not convincing when his life and his utterances are taken as a whole. A letter written to his stepbrother, in 1851, in regard to the severe illness of his father breathes a spirit of piety which could not have been entertained by an unbeliever. His letter of September 4, 1864, to Mrs. Eliza P. Gurney is deeply religious in its sentiments and will compare favorably with the epistles of St. Paul. In his inaugural addresses, his proclamations, his public utterances and his personal correspondence, he exhibits a reverence for



Deity and a reliance upon Divine Providence which only a man of God could sincerely possess.

A witness upon the subject of Mr. Lincoln's religious beliefs, in whom I have implicit confidence, is a close personal friend, the late Rev. William Bishop of Salina, Kansas. During the early days of his ministry he was called upon to fill the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church at Springfield during the vacation of its regular pastor, Dr. Smith. Dr. Bishop occupied the pulpit for some two or three months. Mr. Lincoln was a regular attendant at his church and among other things, Dr. Bishop has this to say in regard to him:

"In the Spring of 1857, Dr. Smith anticipating a necessary absence from his church of two or three months during the summer, invited me to supply his pulpit until his return. Being young and inexperienced in the ministry, with considerable hesitation I accepted his invitation. So I spent my college vacation performing as best I could this service. Mr. Lincoln was a regular attendant at church and evidently an attentive hearer and devout worshiper.

"As a college student I had seen and heard him and looked up to him as a being towering above human men, and I confess I was not a little intimidated by his presence as he sat at the end of a seat well forward toward the pulpit, with his deep eyes fixed upon me and his long legs stretched out in the middle aisle to keep them from (using one of his own colloquialisms)



being scrouged in the narrow space between the pews. My stage fright however was soon very much relieved by his kindness and words of encouragement.

"On a certain Sunday, the third as I recollect it, in my term of service, I delivered a discourse on the text 'Without God in the World'-- the straight translation in the Greek is: 'Atheists in the World'. In discussing Atheism, theoretical and practical, I endeavored to elucidate and enforce the fallacy of the one and the wickedness of the other. At the close of the service, Mr. Lincoln came up and putting his right hand in mine and his left on my shoulder, with other impressive remarks said: 'I can say Amen to all that you have said this morning'."

Mr. Lincoln received a call from his old time friend Joshua F. Speed in the summer of 1864. Entering the President's room unannounced, he found him engaged in reading the Bible. Mr. Speed said he was glad to see the President so profitably engaged. "Yes", was the reply, "I am profitably engaged." "When I knew you in early life", said Speed, "you were a skeptic and so was I. If you have recovered from your skepticism, I am sorry to say I have not." "You are wrong Speed", said the President. "Take all of this book upon reason that you can, and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a happier man".



Mr. Lincoln was not a man who had very much recreation. I do not recall of ever reading or hearing of his taking a vacation. His life was one continuous round of duties. But he had one habit which brightened his life and made it much easier for him to bear its burdens, -- that was the habit of telling humorous stories. He knew a great many stories and he told them well. When practicing law it was not at all unusual for the tavern to be crowded with men eagerly listening for hours to Mr. Lincoln's stories and anecdotes. He used them effectively at times to illustrate the points in a lawsuit and when he became President he told stories to enable him to forget the harassing cares of his office. At times when the fate of the nation seemed to be in the balance awaiting the outcome of some great battle, he would shock the sensibilities of some prim and decorous statesman or diplomat by the narration of one of his funny stories; but they cleared his mind of melancholy and were as helpful to him as the game of golf is to many men of the present day.

This is one of the stories he told on himself; "When I was nominated at Chicago an enterprising fellow thought that a great many people would like to see how Abe Lincoln looked and as I had not long before sat for a photograph, this fellow having seen it, rushed over and bought the negative. He at once got out no end of wood cuts, and so active was their circulation, they were selling in all parts of the country. Soon after they reached Springfield I heard a boy crying them for sale on the streets --



'Here's your likeness of Abe Lincoln!'  
he shouted. 'Buy one, price only two shillings!  
Will look a good deal better when he gets his  
hair combed'."

Upon the last day of his life word was brought to Mr. Lincoln that Jacob Thompson, one of the most prominent men in the Confederate government, would pass through Portland in order to take a steamer for England. Mr. Stanton ordered that he be arrested, but suggested that the matter be submitted to the President for approval. The matter of arresting him was presented to Mr. Lincoln who was washing his hands at the time. Slowly wiping them he said, "No I rather think not. When you have an elephant by the hind leg and he is trying to run away, it's best to let him run." Thompson was not arrested.

We are apt to forget in generalizing about Mr. Lincoln's war activities that he was actually Commander-in Chief of the Army and Navy. His published correspondence contains many letters addressed to the officers in command of his various armies. They indicate the care with which he followed the details of battles and campaigns. He did not arrogate to himself superior knowledge because of his high military rank, and was extremely modest in asserting the possession of any military knowledge or skill. But he had common sense views about what should be done and communicated those views (usually in the way of suggestions only) to his



different commanders. When he found an officer who was capable of exercising a wise discretion, he was ready and willing to give him the fullest opportunity to use his own power of initiative. After a general had been furnished with the necessary number of troops and the proper amount of equipment, Mr. Lincoln expected him to fight; and in this expectation he was frequently disappointed. I think General Grant came up to his ideals in this respect, and as a matter of fact in every other respect, and he was given by the President the utmost freedom of action and the largest possible amount of support.

In reading Mr. Lincoln's correspondence with General Grant, I was impressed with its apparent meagerness. Possibly it was because General Grant was a poor hand at writing letters or making reports. His mind seemed to be concentrated upon his campaigns to such an extent that he took but little interest in keeping his Chief advised of his actions. Upon one occasion the President found it necessary to write to a commander who was expecting additional troops, which General Grant had promised, stating that General Grant was beyond reach, that he had with him the promised brigades and had evidently forgotten to advise the inquiring general that he had changed his mind and needed the troops himself.

During some of his campaigns, Mr. Stanton, Secretary of War, found it necessary in order to secure suitable information in regard to the momentous battles that were being waged, to send his assistant, Mr. Dana, to the front with



General Grant. Mr. Dana kept the Secretary supplied with news that General Grant was too busy to write about.

Mr. Lincoln never saw General Grant until he was appointed to the head of all the armies of the North. They were both from Illinois, but Grant was a very humble citizen at the time the war broke out. But he would fight and he knew how to win campaigns. He had to his credit the battles of Fort Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg and Chattanooga before he ever came face to face with the President. The meeting was a memorable one and the people of Washington almost trampled over each other in their eager desire to see this now hero. Years afterwards, while I was working with Judge Usher in Lawrence, Kansas, a telegram came to him from the Editor of the Globe Democrat of St. Louis stating that the next day or two would be the anniversary of General Grant's appointment as Lieutenant General; that he (Judge Usher) was the only survivor of those who were present at the time, and asking for his recollections of that important event. The Judge dictated his answer to me and I have a copy of it as it afterwards appeared in the newspaper. This is what he said:

"When the President delivered the commission of Lieutenant General to General Grant, the members of the Cabinet were, Mr. Seward, Secretary of State; Mr. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury; Mr. Stanton (successor to Mr. Cameron), Secretary of War; Mr. Waller, Secretary of the Navy; Mr. Blair, Postmaster



General; Mr. Bates, Attorney General; and myself, Secretary of the Interior. Of these and all present upon that occasion, with the exception of General Grant, I am the sole survivor.

"Mr. Lincoln thought it fit and proper to convene the Cabinet to witness the ceremony. Upon my entering the room of the President all of the Cabinet were present with the exception of Mr. Stanton. Soon after I inquired of the President why we were summoned; he made no direct answer. Whether the other members present knew why they were called I do not know. The President seemed to be in good spirits, which made me wonder the more why we were there; but I supposed in due time I would find out, and listened to the conversations going on. The President had not much order in the arranging and keeping of his papers; his table was generally filled up with papers as long as they would lie on it. He did not seem to have any difficulty in finding any paper that he wanted amongst the huge mass thrown promiscuously there. Presently Mr. Stanton, General Halleck and General Grant entered the room. Without accosting the President or any one present, they moved rapidly to the far side of this table and stopped facing the table, with General Grant

between General Halleck and Mr. Stanton. The President was on the opposite side. As they stopped and were in the position described, the President arose and took from the table a scroll tin case, opened it and took out the parchment commission. He then took from the pile of papers upon the table what soon proved to be his address to General Grant, the precise words of which I cannot remember, neither have I a copy. As well as I can remember, it ran nearly in these words:

'General Grant -- The Congress of the United States recently passed a law creating the office of Lieutenant General. It seemed to be the will of Congress, as well as of the people, in which I heartily concur, that the office should be conferred upon you. You were nominated to the Senate for the office and the nomination was confirmed. I now present you your commission.' As he said that he handed to General Grant the commission, and then concluded: 'The loyal people of the nation look to you, under the providence of God, to lead their armies to victory.'

"After the lapse of twenty-one years, it cannot be expected that any one could remember the precise words of the President,



though I believe I have given them quite accurately. Then General Grant took from his vest pocket a paper containing the response to the President. The substance of it I cannot recollect; I do not now remember a single sentence or phrase in it. But I do remember that the paper upon which it was written was probably less than a quarter of a sheet; that he held the paper in his right hand and commenced reading it, and read probably half of it, when his voice gave out. Evidently he had not contemplated the effort of reading, and had commenced without inflating his lungs. When General Grant commenced reading he was standing most awkwardly, what in common parlance would be called 'hip shot'. When his voice failed he straightened himself up in his fullest and best form, threw his shoulders back, took the paper in both hands, one at each end, and drew the paper up within proper reading distance and commenced again at the beginning and read it through in a full strong voice. As he straightened himself up and took the paper in his hands it seemed to me that he was thinking to himself 'I can read this paper without faltering, and I am going to do it'. And he did.

After it was read, the members of the Cabinet were introduced to General Grant. I had never before seen him, neither do I think any other member of the Cabinet had seen him. Mr. Lincoln directly said to General Grant, 'I have never met you before'. Grant replied, 'Yes, you have; I heard you in your debate with Douglas at Freeport, and was there introduced to you; of course, I could not forget you, neither could I expect you to remember me, because multitudes were introduced to you on that occasion'. Mr. Lincoln replied, 'That is so, and I do not think I could be expected to remember all'. It seemed then, as it seems today, to be a remarkable fact that neither the President nor any member of his Cabinet, up to that time, had any personal acquaintance with General Grant. None of us had, to our knowledge, ever seen him. We had heard of him. From the battle of Pittsburg Landing to the battle of Iuka and Corinth the reports were as often disparaging as they were favorable. General Grant never sent anyone to propitiate or make favor with the President. After the battle of Corinth, Judge Dickey, now of the Supreme Court of Illinois, and a personal friend of Mr. Lincoln, came to Washington from Grant's camp and gave such a favorable account



of him as, I believe, gained from Mr. Lincoln his fullest confidence in Grant's abilities, and this confidence was never broken, nor in the least abated. I heard Mr. Lincoln say, on one occasion. 'General Grant is the most extraordinary man in command that I know of.' He said: 'Heard nothing direct from him, and wrote to him to know why, and whether I could do anything to promote his success, and Grant replied that he had tried to do the best he could with what he had; that he believed if he had more men and arms he could use them to good advantage and do more than he had done, but he supposed I had done and was doing all I could; that if I could do more he felt that I would do it.' Lincoln said that Grant's conduct was so different from other generals in command that he could scarcely comprehend it.

"It was not until after the capture of Vicksburg that Grant sent anyone to the President direct from his army. Then he sent General Rawlins. I met him at the White House and was introduced to him by the President. Evidently Rawlins knew more of the field than of the court. He was browned and sun-burned; he sat close in the corner of the fire-place and appeared em-

barrassed to know what to do with his hands. He had provided himself with a new military suit of blue which hung loose upon his emaciated limbs. He was free to answer questions when asked, but showed no disposition to enlarge his speech beyond the appropriate answer. He was modest, and it was plain that he was neither carpet knight nor courtier. He did not come to ask for anything, but the time of his coming and his manner naturally led to the impression that Grant concluded that, after nearly three years of successful war, he might, without being charged with vanity, send his chief of staff to the President and Secretary of War to relate to them, if they wanted to know incidents of his conflicts which might not be embraced in his reports. And well he might. In the language of John A. Logan, his army had with their swords hewn their way to the sea. But I digress. I was prompted to write in order to relate, as far as I could remember, the occurrences when Mr. Lincoln delivered General Grant his commission. His address to Grant and Grant's reply doubtless may be found published in the press of that time. I hope they may be found and published. Mr. Lincoln thought the



occasion of sufficient moment to summon the Cabinet. There now remain none but General Grant and myself who were present on that interesting occasion, and it can hardly be expected that he will find time in the midst of his sufferings to describe it. Perchance he may have described the scene in his writings, and it is quite probable that Messrs. Hay and Nicolay, who are preparing a biography of Mr. Lincoln, may have the originals."

I have heard Judge Usher on a number of occasions repeat remarks made to him by President Lincoln in regard to the relative merits of McClelland and Grant. They were in substance that McClelland was always asking for reinforcements, but when he got all that he asked for, that he did not utilize them to advantage,-- that he was slow to act and lacked aggressiveness. That on the other hand Grant would take what was given to him and without complaining would make the best of the situation and fight.

Mr. Lincoln's letter to General Hooker, upon appointing him to the command of the Army of the Potomac, is one of the most interesting to me that he wrote. It shows him almost in the attitude of a father writing to his son -- commending him and placing great responsibilities upon him, but at the same time putting his finger upon his faults and warning him against them. It is short -- let me read it to you:



"I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course I have done this upon what appear to me to be sufficient reasons, and yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which I am not quite satisfied with you. I believe you to be a brave and skilful soldier, which of course I like. I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right. You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable if not an indispensable quality. You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does good rather than harm; but I think that during General Burnside's command of the army you have taken counsel of your ambition and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country and to a most meritorious and honorable brother officer. I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that the army and the government needed a dictator. Of course it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. The government will support you to the utmost of its ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done and will do for all commanders. I much fear that the spirit which you



have aided to infuse into the army, of criticizing their commander and withholding confidence from him, will now turn upon you. I shall assist you as far as I can to put it down. Neither you nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get any good out of an army while such a spirit prevails in it; and now beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories."

Mr. Lincoln was a modest man. He did not swell up with pride and become dictatorial and arrogant after he had been in the Presidential chair long enough to realize what his powers were. He did not use his authority with the conscious purpose of making a great record for himself. He performed his duties with a full sense of the responsibility resting upon him and with a total disregard of self or the position which his name might thereafter fill in history. The question and the only question with him always was "What is the right thing to do?" He wanted to do God's will and felt himself at all times to be an instrument in the hands of Divine Providence to carry out his plans. As we think upon these things and then reflect upon the position which Mr. Lincoln now occupies in history, of the monuments erected to his memory, and of the homage paid to his name by the entire civilized world, how true do these words of Scripture ring:

"But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and



his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Mr. Lincoln was accessible to everybody. The ignorant and the unlovely had no difficulty in gaining access to him and he listened to their stories with the patience and sympathy of a friend. If he could help them he did, and one of the things which enabled him to stand the strain of his position was the joy and the satisfaction which came to him when he was permitted to relieve human distress or to bring happiness into the lives of those who mourned. The pomp and circumstance of an exalted office did not change or affect the simplicity of his nature and the Abraham Lincoln who took the oath of office on the 4th of March 1865, was the same modest, unassuming, kindly man as the Abraham Lincoln who was made President four years before. And as we consider these characteristics so marked in him and so different from those possessed by most of the men of history who occupied high positions and wielded great power, we are impressed with the truth of that other verse of Scripture with which we are so familiar:

"Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."

But notwithstanding his kind disposition, and his willingness to meet and listen to the troubles of all classes of people, he had a dignity which inspired respect and he was known to resent an intentional insult. Upon one occasion a man who had been given a most patient



audience and was found not to be entitled to the relief requested, remarked, upon hearing the President's denial of his application that it was very easy to see that Mr. Lincoln was not willing to do him justice. Without any hesitation Mr. Lincoln seized the man by the collar and forcibly ejected him from his office.

Mr. Lincoln's natural kindliness caused him to perform many acts of mercy which stood out in marked contrast to the essential cruelty of the war. The man upon the side of the North who was directing it all and was the head and center of the greatest war activities which the world had known, was a kind and a merciful man who never lost an opportunity to do a friendly act or to say a helpful word; and if he could not give a good reason for his acts of humanity, he would give the best reason he could. On one occasion a young woman of German extraction appealed to him to save her brother who had been sentenced to death for desertion. Everyone else in authority had refused to act. There was nothing attractive in the appearance or manner of the young woman, but she succeeded in touching the President's heart. He knew that according to military rules the soldier should be shot, and he could think of no good reason which, as President, he could give for pardoning the offense. But he wanted to do it and it must have appeared to him that some reason had to be given; so he said --



"Well my girl, there seems to be nobody here to plead your cause. You appear to be truthful and honest -- and (with great emphasis) you don't wear hoops. I will grant your request."

At that time hoop skirts were in vogue and evidently Mr. Lincoln did not approve the fashion.

Some of the most pathetic and soul stirring incidents of the war were those in which Mr. Lincoln sought to stop the execution of the soldier boys who for various reasons had been sentenced to death. The cases were usually brought to his attention by the mother; frequently on the very eve of carrying out the sentence. Mr. Lincoln in such cases seemed to become as much exercised over the situation as the mother herself, and would overlook no little detail which seemed necessary in order to make certain that his efforts to exercise clemency should not fail. Upon one occasion when the mother could not tell in what part of the country her son was serving, the President telegraphed his orders to the generals in command of every army he had. One of the boys whose life he saved was restored to his position in the army and afterwards fought valiantly for his country in a number of important battles. Finally in one of the fierce struggles of the war he was mortally wounded, and the last words he uttered, as he lay dying upon the battlefield, was a message to Mr. Lincoln, assuring him that he had faithfully kept the promise which he had made at the time of his pardon.



Mr. Lincoln may have granted pardons in doubtful cases, but if he made any mistakes of this nature, the recording angel certainly blotted out the entries from the book of life, and the American people loved him for it. It was this tender, sympathetic feeling for the soldier boy in trouble, this uncontrollable impulse to assuage the grief of the sorrowing mother, that bound the people to him, that brought the quick response to his calls for troops and that induced men to cheerfully assume the dangers of war and to sing as they placed their lives in his charge:

"We are coming Father Abraham,  
*thru*  
One hundred thousand strong."

Of all the attributes of Mr. Lincoln's character -- the one which seems to me to be the most prominent, and which gives rise to the greatest wonder on my part, was the total lack of animosity or vindictiveness in his make-up, his magnanimity, and his love for mankind, -- even for his own enemies. I will illustrate my meaning by reference to three incidents in his life.

In 1857 Mr. Lincoln was employed as an attorney in a patent suit which was to be tried in the United States Court at Cincinnati. It was the most important litigation with which he had ever been connected and he was naturally very desirous of appearing to the best possible advantage and of obtaining as much credit as possible from the trial of the case. His reputation as a lawyer at that time was merely local, -- he hoped to make it national.



Reverdy Johnson, one of the great lawyers of the country, was to be his opponent, and Mr. Lincoln made very careful preparation for the presentation of the case. When the cause came on for trial it was thought wise by Mr. Lincoln's clients to employ a lawyer with a great national reputation, and more experience in large litigation than he had; to assist in the trial of the case. Edwin M. Stanton was the lawyer selected. When the cause came on for hearing Mr. Stanton could scarcely conceal his contempt for his awkward associate counsel, made sneering remarks about him (some of which Mr. Lincoln heard) and so managed it that Mr. Lincoln was prevented from making an argument in the case. Scarcely anything in Mr. Lincoln's life left such a bad impression upon his mind as this incident and he departed from Cincinnati with the expressed determination to never visit that city again. Later on when Mr. Lincoln became President he was severely criticized by Mr. Stanton, and remarks were made about him by Mr. Stanton which were well calculated to arouse the indignation of any ordinary mortal.

But when Mr. Lincoln desired to appoint a Secretary of War to succeed Simon Cameron, the most important position in the Administration, Mr. Stanton was the man selected for the place. The President believed that he was more capable of discharging the duties of the office than any other available man, and was willing to disregard his personal resentment, if he had any, and give to what might ordinarily be termed a personal enemy, the honors and emoluments of a most important public office.



Similar treatment was accorded to Mr. Chase, his Secretary of the Treasury. Mr. Chase believed that he was much more capable of filling the office of President of the United States than was Mr. Lincoln. While acting as Secretary of the Treasury he laid plans to become a candidate against Mr. Lincoln and made himself very obnoxious to the President's friends. The relations between the President and his Secretary of the Treasury became so strained that Mr. Lincoln was compelled to accept Mr. Chase's resignation. Yet when he found it necessary later on to appoint a successor to Chief Justice Taney, Mr. Lincoln promptly named his rival, Salmon P. Chase.

Towards the close of the Civil War when the bitterness of southern feeling might naturally have caused rancor in his heart, Mr. Lincoln apparently had nothing but kindly personal feelings for his antagonists and at his second inaugural displayed the magnanimity of his character in the utterance of those memorable words:

"With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us ~~us~~ strive to finish the work we are in."

These incidents are fairly typical of the man and show the manner in which he treated personal rivals and antagonists. They indicate a quality which, in my judgment, more than any other, made him a great man. In some persons



it might indicate weakness. In Mr. Lincoln it demonstrated conscious strength. It was the outward manifestation of a quality which constitutes the very essence of Christianity. Mr. Lincoln's success in handling men proves that the command of our Master to love our enemies and to do good to them who despitefully use us, was not intended as mere doctrine for idealists, but as good, sound practical advice for our guidance in the everyday affairs of life.

In this respect Abraham Lincoln was the antithesis of Andrew Jackson. Considering the early environment of both men Jackson's vindictiveness is more natural, looking at it from the ordinary standpoint, than Lincoln's magnanimity. Both were men of great natural parts and possessed masterful wills. One was the exponent of animosity, the other of love. Mr. Lincoln's standing as a man and as a leader of men will always outrank that of Jackson's, and this superiority will be due very largely to the fact, that one was a man whose disposition it was to punish, the other was a man whose disposition it was to forgive.

More than half a century has rolled by since Mr. Lincoln's death, and as we look over our country, unified and strengthened beyond measure during that period of time, it is difficult to realize the existence of the feud between the North and the South which drove them into mortal combat with each other and almost resulted in the destruction of our Government. It is hard for us

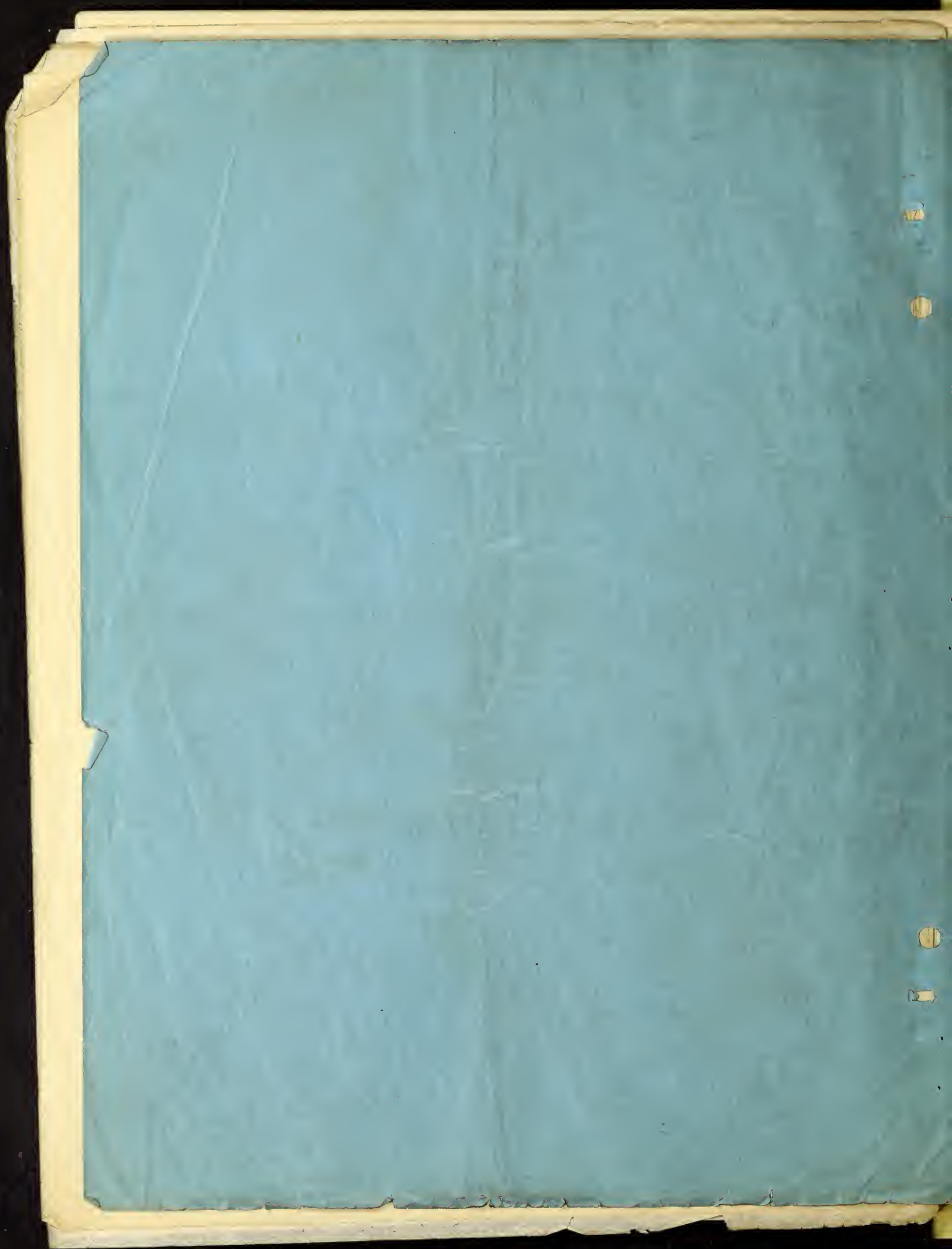


to understand that human slavery existed in this country during the lifetime of many people now living, and that men and women had the status of mere chattels and were bought and sold as livestock is handled on the market. But it is all true nevertheless, and had it not been for the man whose name we honor tonight, the country we love so much would have been rent in twain, and in all probability slavery, with all its horrors, would still hold within its grasp some of the fairest portions of our land. But thanks to Abraham Lincoln, we are infact a united country and a free people. The South has accepted the arbitrament of war in good faith; the sons of the men who wore the gray now serve with distinction under the stars and stripes, and the government established by our fathers "of the people, by the people and for the people", still remains to give happiness to those within its borders, and the hope of freedom and liberty to all mankind.











LOOMIS, N.H.

MANUSCRIPTS

SPECIMENS

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